

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please CANCEL claims 2, 4, 13, 15, 24, 26 and 34 and AMEND claims 1, 3, 5, 6, 8-12, 14, 16, 17, 19-23, 25, 27, 28, and 30-33 in accordance with the following:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An information processing method, comprising the steps of:

by obtaining information concerning a usage amount of money of a customer in a store, calculating an accumulated usage amount of money of said customer;

comparing said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer with a predetermined reference amount of money as to said accumulated usage amount of money; and  
upon detecting that said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, estimating an outgo time of said customer on the basis of a point of time when said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, based on at least a comparison result of said comparing step.

2. (CANCELLED)

3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1, 2, further comprising a step of, if, upon detecting that a second customer makes a reservation without time designation for a reservation unit including a seat of said customer and it is judged that said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, notifying said second customer of the estimated outgo time of said customer.

4. (CANCELLED)

5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said predetermined reference amount of money ~~as to said accumulated usage amount of money~~ is set according to at least one of the number of customers and a category of a date.

6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1 [[4]], wherein said predetermined time corresponds to said predetermined reference amount of money ~~as to said accumulated usage amount of money~~ and is set according to at least one of the number of customers and a category of a date.

7. (ORIGINAL) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer means an accumulated usage amount of money per customer.

8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising ~~a step of~~ notifying a second customer who made a reservation for a reservation unit including a seat of said customer ~~if upon detecting that~~ outgo information of said customer is obtained before said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money.

9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

~~if upon detecting that~~ outgo information of said customer is received, judging whether a reservation of a second customer is registered with regard to a reservation unit including a seat of said customer; and

~~if upon detecting that~~ said reservation of said second customer is registered, transmitting an instruction concerning a reserved seat to a restaurant terminal.

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

~~if upon detecting that~~ a reservation as to a reservation unit including a seat of said customer is not registered when outgo information of said customer is received but said reservation by a second customer is registered as to another reservation unit, judging whether said reservation by said second customer can be changed to said reservation unit including said seat of said customer; and

notifying said second customer ~~if upon detecting that~~ said seat can be changed.

11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising ~~a step of~~ transmitting information concerning a usage status of said customer to a terminal of a second customer ~~if upon detecting that~~ a request for obtaining information concerning a store usage status is received from said second customer, said

information concerning said usage status generated based on at least ~~said-a~~ comparison result of said comparing step.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A program embodied on a medium for causing a computer to perform information processing, said program comprising ~~the steps of~~:

by obtaining information concerning a usage amount of money of a customer in a store, calculating an accumulated usage amount of money of said customer;

comparing said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer with a predetermined reference amount of money as to said accumulated usage amount of money; and  
upon detecting that said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, estimating an outgo time of said customer on the basis of a point of time when said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money based on at least a comparison result of said comparing step.

13. (CANCELLED)

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The program as set forth in claim-13 12, further comprising ~~a step of, if, upon detecting that~~ a second customer makes a reservation without time designation for a reservation unit including a seat of said customer and it is judged that said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, notifying said second customer of the estimated outgo time of said customer.

15. (CANCELLED)

16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The program as set forth in claim 12, wherein said predetermined reference amount of money ~~as to said accumulated usage amount of money~~ is set according to at least one of the number of customers and a category of a date.

17. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The program as set forth in claim-15 12, wherein said predetermined time corresponds to said predetermined reference amount of money ~~as to said accumulated usage amount of money~~ and is set according to at least one of the number of customers and a category of a date.

18. (ORIGINAL) The program as set forth in claim 12, wherein said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer means an accumulated usage amount of money per customer.

19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The program as set forth in claim 12, further comprising-a step-of notifying a second customer who made a reservation for a reservation unit including a seat of said customer-if upon detecting that outgo information of said customer is obtained before said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money.

20. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The program as set forth in claim 12, further comprising the steps of:

if upon detecting that outgo information of said customer is received, judging whether a reservation of a second customer is registered with regard to a reservation unit including a seat of said customer; and

if upon detecting that said reservation of said second customer is registered, transmitting an instruction concerning a reserved seat to a restaurant terminal.

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The program as set forth in claim 12, further comprising the steps of:

if upon detecting that a reservation as to a reservation unit including a seat of said customer is not registered when outgo information of said customer is received but said reservation by a second customer is registered as to another reservation unit, judging whether said reservation by said second customer can be changed to said reservation unit including said seat of said customer; and

notifying said second customer-if upon detecting that said seat can be changed.

22. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The program as set forth in claim 12, further comprising-a step-of transmitting information concerning a usage status of said customer to a terminal of a second customer-if upon detecting that a request for obtaining information concerning a store usage status is received from said second customer, said information concerning said usage status generated based on at least said a comparison result of said comparing-step.

23. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An information processing apparatus, comprising:

means for calculating an accumulated usage amount of money of a customer by obtaining information concerning a usage amount of money of said customer in a store;

means for comparing said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer with a predetermined reference amount of money as to said accumulated usage amount of money; and

upon detecting that said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, means for estimating an outgo time of said customer on the basis of a point of time when said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, based on at least a comparison result of said means for comparing.

24. (CANCELLED)

25. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim-24 23, further comprising means for, if upon detecting that a second customer makes a reservation without time designation for a reservation unit including a seat of said customer and it is judged that said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money, notifying said second customer of the estimated outgo time of said customer.

26. (CANCELLED)

27. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein said predetermined reference amount of money as to said accumulated usage amount of money is set according to at least one of the number of customers and a category of a date.

28. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim-26 23, wherein said predetermined time corresponds to said predetermined reference amount of money as to said accumulated usage amount of money and is set according to at least one of the number of customers and a category of a date.

29. (ORIGINAL) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer means an accumulated usage amount of money per customer.

30. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim 23, further comprising means for notifying a second customer who made a reservation for a reservation unit including a seat of said customer if upon detecting that outgo information of said customer is obtained before said accumulated usage amount of money of said customer exceeds said predetermined reference amount of money.

31. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim 23, further comprising:

means for judging whether a reservation of a second customer is registered with regard to a reservation unit including a seat of said customer if upon detecting that outgo information of said customer is received; and

means for transmitting an instruction concerning a reserved seat to a restaurant terminal if upon detecting that said reservation of said second customer is registered.

32. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim 23, further comprising:

means for, if upon detecting that a reservation as to a reservation unit including a seat of said customer is not registered when outgo information of said customer is received but said reservation by a second customer is registered as to another reservation unit, judging whether said reservation by said second customer can be changed to said reservation unit including said seat of said customer; and

means for notifying said second customer if upon detecting that said seat can be changed.

33. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The information processing apparatus as set forth in claim 23, further comprising means for transmitting information concerning a usage status of said customer to a terminal of a second customer if upon detecting that a request for obtaining information concerning a store usage status is received from said second customer, said information concerning said usage status generated based on at least said a comparison result of said means for comparing.

34. (CANCELLED)